

# Planning Update

## *Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment Sullys Hill National Game Preserve*

Issue 1, May 2006

### The National Wildlife Refuge System

Sullys Hill National Game Preserve is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System).

The Refuge System began in 1903 when President Theodore Roosevelt established Pelican Island in Florida as the nation's first bird sanctuary and went on to establish many other sanctuaries for wildlife.

This small network of sanctuaries continued to expand and became the National Wildlife Refuge System—the largest system of lands in the world dedicated for the conservation of wildlife.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) administers the Refuge System.

### What is a comprehensive conservation plan?

In 1997, Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (Improvement Act). This legislation provides clear guidance for management of the Refuge System including a new mission statement.

*The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.*



Many bison reside on the preserve.

The Improvement Act directs the Service to manage the Refuge System as a national system of lands and waters devoted to conserving wildlife and maintaining biological integrity of ecosystems.

To support and fulfill this mission, the Improvement Act also requires that, by 2012, the Service will have developed a comprehensive conservation plan for each national wildlife refuge in the Refuge System at the time of the Act.

To meet this requirement, the Service has started work on a comprehensive conservation plan for Sullys Hill National Game Preserve. This 15-year plan will provide long-range guidance and management direction for all the preserve's programs. The plan will outline a vision statement and supporting goals, objectives, and strategies. It is a "living" document that will be updated every 15 years.

The accompanying environmental assessment or environmental impact statement, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), will describe management alternatives considered and their effects on the environment.

In summary, the comprehensive conservation plan will do the following:

1. Outline a vision
2. Guide management decisions
3. Outline goals, objectives, and strategies to achieve the preserve's vision and purposes
4. Provide other agencies and the public with an understanding of the management strategies to be carried out at Sullys Hill National Game Preserve



### What are the steps and estimated completion dates for this planning process?

1. Preplanning, January–July 2006
2. Public involvement, May–July 2006
3. Finalize vision statement and goals, July 2006
4. Develop and analyze alternatives for addressing issues and achieving goals, August 2006
5. Prepare the draft comprehensive conservation plan and NEPA document, September–December 2006
6. Public review of the draft comprehensive conservation plan and NEPA document, February 2007
7. Develop the final comprehensive conservation plan and NEPA document, March–May 2007

### Why did we send you this update?

We are widely distributing this planning update to generate interest in the planning process and collect ideas and thoughts from the public, state and local governments, organizations, and other partners.

You are receiving this update because you were identified as someone who may want to be kept informed or share ideas about the future management of Sullys Hill National Game Preserve.

## Sullys Hill National Game Preserve Facts

### Purposes

1. "...lands that are now reserved or may hereafter be included within the boundaries of the...Sullys Hill National Park Game Preserve...are hereby further reserved and set apart for...refuges and breeding grounds for birds."

2. "...as a big game preserve, refuge, and breeding grounds for wild animals and birds...provided, that the said game preserve is to be made available to the public for recreational purposes in so far as consistent with the use of this area as a game preserve...provided further, that hunting shall not be permitted on said game preserve."

### History

- 1904 President Theodore Roosevelt establishes the area as a national park.
- 1914 Congress makes Sullys Hill a big game preserve.
- 1921 President Warren Harding reserves the area as a refuge and breeding ground for birds and all wildlife.
- 1931 The park is transferred to the National Wildlife Refuge System.

### Wildlife and Habitat

1,675 acres in size

Unique mix of woodland, prairie, and wetland habitats

Black-tailed prairie dog, white-tailed deer, bison, and elk

260 bird species

### Management

- Prescribed fire
- Invasive species control
- Forest regeneration
- Wetland development
- Big game herd health and genetics
- Nesting structures

### Visitor Services

- State-of-the-art visitor center and classrooms
- Birding and Nature Festival
- Winter Festival
- Public amphitheater programs
- Kids in Nature
- Boy and Girl Scout days
- Junior Ranger Program
- Eco Ed Camps
- 4-H achievement days
- Teacher education workshops
- Special topic guided tours
- 56,000 annual visitors



Visitor Center at Sullys Hill National Game Preserve

### How can you participate in this process and provide comments?

We have enclosed a comment form and return envelope for you to share your ideas with the planning team. We will also accept emails and other written formats. All written comments must be postmarked by August 1, 2006 to be considered.

You may also wish to participate in our open house. This will be held June 29, 2006 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Sullys Hill National Game Preserve Visitor Center. The visitor center can be reached by going south from Devils Lake, North Dakota, on Highway 20/57 toward Fort Totten. You will see a large entrance sign to your left. You may also call 701/662 8611 for further instructions.

### Will you be getting future planning updates?

If you would like to continue to receive periodic planning updates, please complete the enclosed "mailing list consent" form and return it in the envelope provided.

Since this mailing list is subject to the Freedom of Information Act, we need your permission to place your name on the permanent mailing list. If you do not return this form, we will assume you do not wish to receive any further updates.



### Draft Vision Statement

Overlooking North Dakota's largest natural lake and riding the tops of a glacial thrust block formation, Sullys Hill National Game Preserve is dressed in undulating native woodlands and prairie. Using broad community support and Teddy Roosevelt's ideas, Sullys Hill will conserve and manage native prairie and healthy forests while perpetuating plains bison, Rocky Mountain elk, migrating waves of warblers, and hundreds of other bird species.

Sullys Hill will be renowned as a regional conservation learning center greeting families, students, and outdoor enthusiasts while teaching America's wildlife heritage, prairie and wetland values, and the stories of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

### Additional Information and Contacts

To learn more about Sullys Hill National Game Preserve, please visit our website: [www.fws.gov/sullyshill](http://www.fws.gov/sullyshill)

For questions or to provide comments by email, please contact Sullys Hill National Game Preserve at 701/766 4272 or [SullysHill@fws.gov](mailto:SullysHill@fws.gov).

You may fax or mail your written comments to

Laura King, Planning Team Leader  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
9754 143 ½ Ave. SE  
Cayuga, ND 58013  
Fax 701/724 3683



May 2006